

REMARKS

Claims 1-8 and 11-21 are presently pending in the application. By this Amendment, independent claims 1 and 17 have been amended. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended during the interview on July 19, 2006. During the interview, the above claim amendments were discussed. See Examiner's Interview Summary. For convenience, the arguments are reiterated below.

The Examiner has rejected the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103, citing Shennib (US 6,914,994) and Hou (US 6,711,271). The Examiner combines these references with the Shulz reference (US 6,516,073) in rejecting dependent claims 7, 9, 12 and 20.

While the references cited by the Examiner (e.g. Hou) appear to disclose switching from normal mode to sleep mode, the references do not make use of the sleep mode to perform tasks other than processing the audio signals from the environment as the Applicants' invention does.

In Applicants' invention, the controller multiplexes the processor between a power-saving state and a sound-processing state. It further multiplexes the power-saving state into a first portion, in which power to the processor is reduced, and a second portion, in which power to the processor is maintained to allow the processor to perform tasks other than processing audio signals from the environment. See Applicants' Specification at paragraphs 17-20, for example. The sophisticated use of multiplexing allows the power-saving state to be much more fully utilized than the references of record will permit.

Accordingly, to more fully distinguish the Applicants' invention from the references, independent claims 1 and 17 have been amended to make it more clear that in the sound-processing state audio signals from the environment are processed and that in the second portion of the power saving state the processor performs tasks other than processing the audio signals from the environment.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in a condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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